

Closing of This Week is likely in November

This Week magazine, this country's oldest nationally distributed Sunday newspaper supplement, will suspend publication in November, if currently distributing newspapers agree to an offer by Fred Stapleford, publisher, to be released from their contracts.

The news of the suspension came Wednesday (August 13) following an offer in April by Crowell Collier and Macmillan Inc., the parent company, to underwrite completely the cost of publication if enough newspapers would agree to distribute the supplement for two years (E&P, May 10). The plan aimed at building the magazine's certified circulation needs, plus five percent.

In a letter addressed to executives of distributing papers, Stapleford said: "I deeply regret having to advise you that despite widespread expressions of good will toward our effort, our best judgment is that the necessary circulation commitment cannot be attained."

Seven papers have either declined the offer or have not yet made a declaration. And, Stapleford added, there are not enough prospects to replace this group and provide additional circulation.

The economic factors leading to the decision, he said, were:

1—Those of the present newspapers that have entered cancellations effective December 31, will in all probability exercise them. There are 15 cancellations on record, representing circulation of 4.3 million.

2—Those of the present newspapers that have not entered cancellations will provide in 1970 only 5.6 million circulation. "Our estimate of advertising sales potential at this circulation pattern and level is that, even under the most stringent operating economies, the expectable certified circulation cost billable to the newspapers will be approximately \$10 per thousand," Stapleford explained.

3—"We will not be able to maintain the editorial staff and product that have brought so many compliments."

Stapleford's letter concluded: "It is a pity that This Week,

so long such a distinguished member of the newspaper family, evidently has outlasted its economic usefulness to newspapers and advertisers. Although we do not regret in any sense our determined effort to give it renaissance, we believe it would be foolhardy to continue publishing when all the vital signs are negative."

Staff members of *This Week* were informed of the probable suspension, and plans are being made to help them find new employment or pay them severance.

This Week is the successor to *Every Week*, a supplement published between 1902 and 1905 by Joseph Palmer Knapp. The magazine's peak year was 1957, when it carried some 1,025 pages of advertising. Its circulation high was achieved in 1963 with a total of 14.6 million. It was acquired by Crowell Collier and Macmillan in May, 1968.

The two major supplements remaining if *This Week* folds are *Parade*, owned by Whitney Communications, and *Family Weekly*, owned by Downe Communications. The Hearst Corporation suspended publication of the *American Weekly* in September 1963 after 67 years of existence.

While the Sunday supplements have been affected seriously by television's inroads on advertising, they have also been faced with the rapid development of locally-edited magazines which provide an attractive medium for both national and local advertisers. *This Week* had hoped to make gains if an experiment in Birmingham—where the local magazine is wrapped around the national magazine—caught on.

With *This Week* folding, several of the newspaper publishers now distributing it opened negotiations with *Parade* and *Family Weekly*. *Parade* is in 88 papers with 14.3 million circulation and *Family Weekly* has 224 papers mostly in small markets with 6.2 million circulation.

This Week carried 451 pages of ads last year—down from a peak of 1,025 pages in 1957. *Parade* ran 531 pages and *Family Weekly*, 571 pages in 1968.